

10 ways to reduce belly bloat



Get Dr. Robynne Chutkan’s secrets to a happy gut. (Photo, Hiroshi Watanabe/Getty Images.)

“Why am I so bloated?” I hear it nearly every day in my gastroenterology practice. Over the course of my career, I’ve gone from helping a handful of women a week with bloating, sluggish fullness and constipation to feeling like I’m dealing with a full-on epidemic.

Here are my simple solutions to help a slow-moving GI tract:

1. Don't skip meals; do pack snacks

Missing meals results in overeating later in the day when the stomach is even less active. Travel with snacks like a piece of fruit to avoid going for long periods of time without eating.

2. Eat small and frequently

Eating mini meals every three to four hours will keep you from getting hungry while also giving your stomach adequate time to empty in between meals.

3. Split servings

Try taking your usual meal and dividing it into two servings a few hours apart.

4. Eat out early

If you're going to eat out, make it lunch or brunch rather than dinner.

5. Impose a dinner curfew

Stomach contractility [one of the first stages of digestion] decreases markedly after dark.

6. Wait four hours . . .

. . . after eating to exercise or lie down. This will ensure you're not jogging or sleeping with a full stomach.

7. Go for a walk

You don't need to run a marathon after meals; even just a quick walk around the block will help stimulate [good digestion].

8. Limit fatty foods

Watch out for foods with a high fat content, such as meat, cheese and cream sauces, which slow down stomach emptying.

9. Split up your fibre

Avoid eating a large amount of fibre at one time, which can lead to a full stomach and abdominal discomfort.

10. Sip, don't gulp

Hydration is important for keeping the products of digestion moving, but don't chug large amounts of fluid. Sip throughout the day instead. Drink liquids in between rather than during meals to avoid overfilling the stomach.

Try Dr. Robynne's magic smoothie

Ingredients

1 ripe banana, sliced

2 cups mixed berries

1 cup raw spinach, kale, collards or chard, washed (central stem removed for the kale, collards or chard)

1 tbsp ground psyllium husk

1 tbsp ground flaxseed

1 cup crushed ice

1 cup almond milk, coconut milk or coconut water

Blend well in a mixer and drink immediately. Makes 2 large servings.

Find your gutbliss: Dr Robynne Chutkan is one of North America's leading gastroenterologists. She uses the word *gutbliss* to describe her integrative approach to creating bliss inside the GI tract with easy lifestyle changes. Her book *Gutbliss*, \$28, is available now.